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REMARKS

In response to the Official Action mailed July 18, 2002, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration, reexamination and allowance of claims 16-17 and 20-22 in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

The Examiner has rejected claims 16-25 under 35 U.S.C. §112, 2nd paragraph as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the applicant regards as the invention. Specifically the Examiner requests clarification of the recitations "having a width and a thickness at the first and second sides and a pair of edge regions" and "having substantially consistent thickness at the first and second sides and at the edge regions". Applicant has amended claim 16 to recite that the metal strap base has a width defining first and second sides and a thickness defining a pair of opposing edge regions. Applicant has further amended claim 16 to recite that the coating has a first substantially consistent thickness at the first and second sides and a second substantially consistent thickness at the pair of opposing edge regions. Applicant respectfully requests entry of this amendment in the application file and further request that the Examiner withdraw this basis for rejection.

The Examiner further requests clarification of the recitation "has a greater thickness at about the edge regions and on the first and second regions defining a dog-bone profile". Applicant has amended claim 17 to recite that the coating has a greater thickness at about the pair of opposing edge regions and about the regions of the first and second sides adjacent to the pair of opposing edge regions than on remaining regions of the first and second sides, therein defining a dog-bone profile. Applicant respectfully requests entry of this amendment in the application file and further request that the Examiner withdraw this basis for rejection.

The Examiner has next rejected claims 16 and 19-25 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by Winkle Sr. et al, U.S. Patent No. 5,176,75. The Examiner characterizes Winkle Sr. et al as disclosing a corrosion-resistant coated and cured strap comprising an elongated metal strap element, the metal strap base element having a width and a thickness defining first and second sides and a pair of edge regions, and a melted and

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cured powder coating on the base element, the coating having a substantially consistent thickness at the first and second sides and at the edge regions. The Examiner further characterizes Winkle as disclosing the powder as being an epoxy material and further adds that the coating has a thickness of about 0.2 thousandths of an inch to about 5.0 thousandths of an inch.

Applicant disagrees with the Examiner's characterization of Winkle's coating generally and the resulting coating thickness on the elongated metal strap base element.

A principal object of Winkle is to form a coating having a uniform thickness on both sides of a metal strip. Winkle's metal strips vary in width from about 30.5 cm to about 152 cm (see col. 7, lines 46-48 and col. 9 and 10, Table 3), as opposed to straps which range from about 2" (5.08 cm) to about 1/2" (1.27cm) in width. Nowhere does Winkle teach about having a coating with a substantially consistent thickness at the pair of opposing edge regions.

Winkle disclosure is directed to "forming a coating on both sides of a continuously moving metal strip from electro-statically charged powder" (see col. 2, lines 23-25). The disclosure further discusses the process in that "A plurality of spray guns is positioned on both sides of the strip with the nozzles generally being aligned parallel to the rolling direction of the moving strip" (see col. 2, lines 35-38). Winkle teaches that this process leads to a smooth surface and a uniform thickness.

Applicant's disagreement with assertion that Winkle anticipates the presently claimed invention is specifically directed to Winkle's desire to provide a uniform thickness. The claimed invention, clearly distinguishable from Winkle is directed to a coated strap that has a first substantially consistent thickness at the first and second sides of the strap and a second substantially consistent thickness at the opposing edges, the first and second thickness being different from the other.

Thus, Applicant submits that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) is now improper and respectfully and earnestly solicits the Examiner's withdrawal of same.

The Examiner has next rejected claim 17 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Winkle, Sr. et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,176,755, in view of Levine, U.S. Patent No. 4,601,958). In this rejection, the Examiner states that Winkle discloses a

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corrosion-resistant coated and cured strap comprising an elongated metal strap base element, the metal strap base element having a width and a thickness defining a first and second sides and a pair of edge regions; and a melted and cured powder coating on the base element; the coating having a substantially consistent thickness at the first and second sides and at the edge regions. The Examiner further characterizes Winkle as failing to disclose a dog-bone profile, but indicates that Levine teaches a dog-bone profile in the art for the purpose of minimizing corrosion to a metal strap. The Examiner concludes that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention was made to have modified the coating thickness in Winkle, Sr. et al. to define a dog-bone profile as suggested by Levine in order to minimize corrosion to a metal strap.

The present invention is directed to a corrosion-resistant coated and cured strap. The strap is formed from an elongated metal strap base element that has a width defining first and second sides and a thickness defining on a pair of edge regions. As amended, claim 16 is directed to a melted and cured powder coating on the base element. The coating has a first substantially consistent thickness at the first and second sides, and a second substantially consistent thickness at the edge regions, the first and second thicknesses being different from one another. The Examiner's suggestion that modifying the coating thickness in Winkle, Sr. et al. would have produced a dog-bone profile is in Applicant's view in error. In Winkle, Sr. et al, the principal objective was to form a coating having *uniform thickness* on both sides of a metal strip. The spray guns used were positioned with their nozzles generally aligned parallel to the rolling direction of the rolling strip. No spray gun was positioned to apply powder to the opposing edge regions of the strip. Therefore, modifying the coating thickness on the first and second sides of the strip would never have produced a dog-bone profile as suggested by Levine.

Hence, it is Applicant's position that it would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the applicant's invention was made to have modified the coating thickness in Winkle, Sr. et al. to obtain a dog-bone profile as suggested by Levine in order to minimize corrosion to a metal strap. As such, it is Applicant's

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position that the claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) are improper and should be withdrawn.

In conclusion, applicant respectfully submits that claims 16, 17 and 19-22 are in condition for allowance, that claims 23-25 stand cancelled, and such action is earnestly submitted. Applicant believes that there is no fee due in connection with the present amendment. If, however, there is a fee due, Applicant requests that this paper constitute any necessary petition and authorizes the Commissioner to charge any underpayment, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 23-0920. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

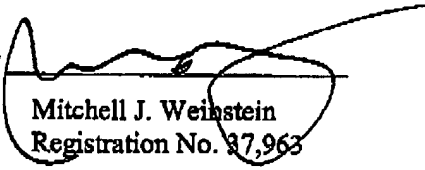
Attached herewith, for the Examiner's convenience, is page 7 entitled "CLAIMS MARKED-UP TO INDICATE CHANGES"

Also attached herewith, for the Examiner's convenience, is page 8 entitled "CLEAN SET OF CLAIMS FOLLOWING ENTRY OF THE PRESENT AMENDMENT"

If the examiner finds that there are any outstanding issues which may be resolved by a telephone interview, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below listed number

Respectfully submitted,
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CLAIMS MARKED-UP TO INDICATE CHANGES

16. (Amended) A corrosion-resistant coated and cured strap comprising: an elongated metal strap base element, the metal strap base element having a width [and a thickness] defining first and second sides and a thickness defining a pair of opposing edge regions; and

a melted and cured powder coating on the base element, the coating having a first substantially consistent thickness at the first and second sides and a second substantially consistent thickness at the edge regions, the first and second thicknesses being different from one another

17. (Amended) The corrosion-resistant coated and cured strap in accordance with claim 16 wherein the coating has a greater thickness at about the pair of opposing edge regions and [on] about the regions of the first and second sides adjacent the pair of opposing edge regions than on remaining surfaces of the first and second sides therein defining a dog-bone profile.

20. (Amended) The corrosion-resistant strap in accordance with claim 16 wherein the first thickness of the coating [has a thickness of about] is about 0.2 thousandths of an inch to about 5.0 thousandths of an inch.

21. (Amended) The corrosion-resistant strap in accordance with claim 20 wherein the first thickness of the coating [has a thickness of about] is about 0.6 thousandths of an inch to about 1.2 thousandths of an inch.

22. (Amended) The corrosion-resistant strap in accordance with claim 21 wherein the first thickness of the coating [has a thickness of about] is about 0.8 thousandths of an inch.

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CLEAN SET OF CLAIMS FOLLOWING
ENTRY OF THE PRESENT AMENDMENT

16. (Amended) A corrosion-resistant coated and cured strap comprising: an elongated metal strap base element, the metal strap base element having a width defining first and second sides and a thickness defining a pair of opposing edge regions; and

a melted and cured powder coating on the base element, the coating having a first substantially consistent thickness at the first and second sides and a second substantially consistent thickness at the edge regions, the first and second thicknesses being different from one another.

17. (Amended) The corrosion-resistant coated and cured strap in accordance with claim 16 wherein the coating has a greater thickness at about the pair of opposing edge regions and about the regions of the first and second sides adjacent to the pair of opposing edge regions than on remaining surfaces of the first and second sides therein defining a dog-bone profile.

20. (Amended) The corrosion-resistant strap in accordance with claim 16 wherein the first thickness of the coating is about 0.2 thousandths of an inch to about 5.0 thousandths of an inch.

21. (Amended) The corrosion-resistant strap in accordance with claim 20 wherein the first thickness of the coating is about 0.6 thousandths of an inch to about 1.2 thousandths of an inch.

22. (Amended) The corrosion-resistant strap in accordance with claim 21 wherein the first thickness of the coating is about 0.8 thousandths of an inch.